

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** December 8, 2011

**Agenda Item:** 2012 Helena Urban Deer Proposed Take

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Approval of Proposed Rule

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

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### **Background**

In 2003 the Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control wildlife to address public health and safety within city limits. Such plans must be approved by FWP. The City of Helena subsequently developed an Urban Deer Management Plan seeking to initially remove 350 deer to achieve an objective of 25 deer per square mile in the city and presented it to FWP and the FWP Commission. After much discussion, Commissioners ultimately approved two pilot projects that allowed for the removal of 200 urban deer by the City of Helena Police Department with limited assistance from FWP.

After the pilot efforts, and from lessons learned, the City of Helena sought to define a programmatic approach for its Urban Deer Management Plan. This included a third, programmatic environmental assessment that confirmed objectives and methods relative to urban deer management in Helena. While the programmatic EA did confirm objectives and methods, any take/removal of deer will require approval by the FWP Commission on an annual basis. To date a total of 425 deer have been removed. The latest removal effort took place during the 2011 winter. No significant FWP staff or resources have been or are slated specifically for this deer-removal component. Any quotas do not apply to individual deer removed under urgent public-safety situations that may occur at any time and often involve direct FWP participation.

A population survey early this fall showed a density estimate of about 32 deer/square mile within the City. That is reduced from 47 deer/sq mile and above the identified density target of 25. Given projected growth, the City is looking for a take up to 200 deer to reduce the population once again to the target of 25 deer/sq mile. Proposed methods are identical to those employed previously (trap and lethal removal). Consistent with previous efforts, deer are proposed to be taken between Jan. 20, 2012 and March 31, 2012. The City will assess deer numbers, complaints/concerns and landowner tolerance for deer and traps when identifying trapping areas and specific trap sites.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The City of Helena provided extensive public involvement in developing its plan and the previous urban deer environmental assessments. FWP's provided separate 30-day public comment periods. Public support has been split throughout these earlier processes. In addition to public comment at the Dec. 8 Commission meeting, public comment will run thru 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 9, 2012. Any final adoption by the FWP Commission will be at the Jan.19, 2012 meeting.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2011 (status quo) as per staff justifications, public comment and/or Commission discussion.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission adopt the proposed 2012 take of urban deer by the City of Helena as presented by City staff and FWP.

